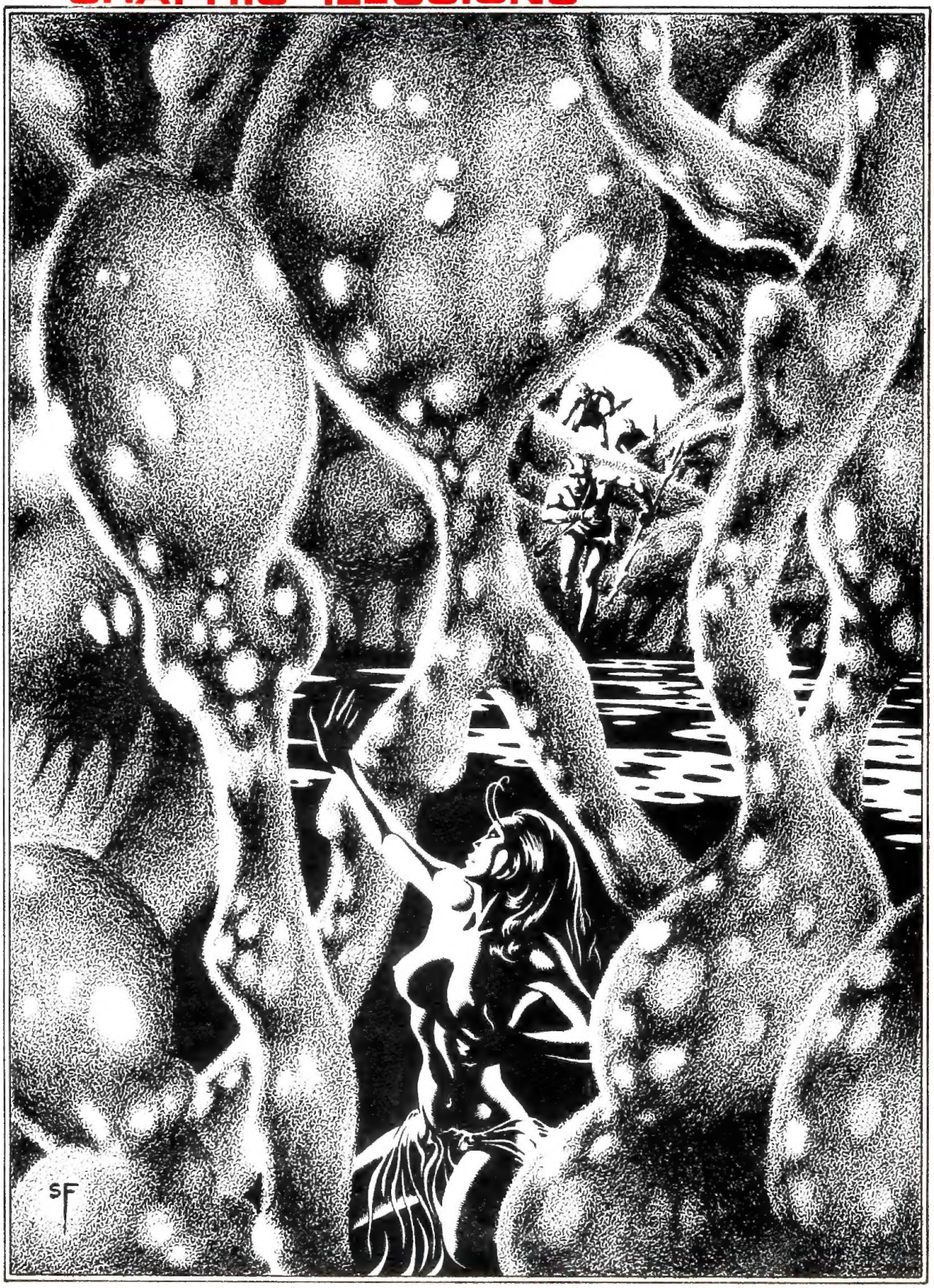
GRAPHIC ILLUSIONS

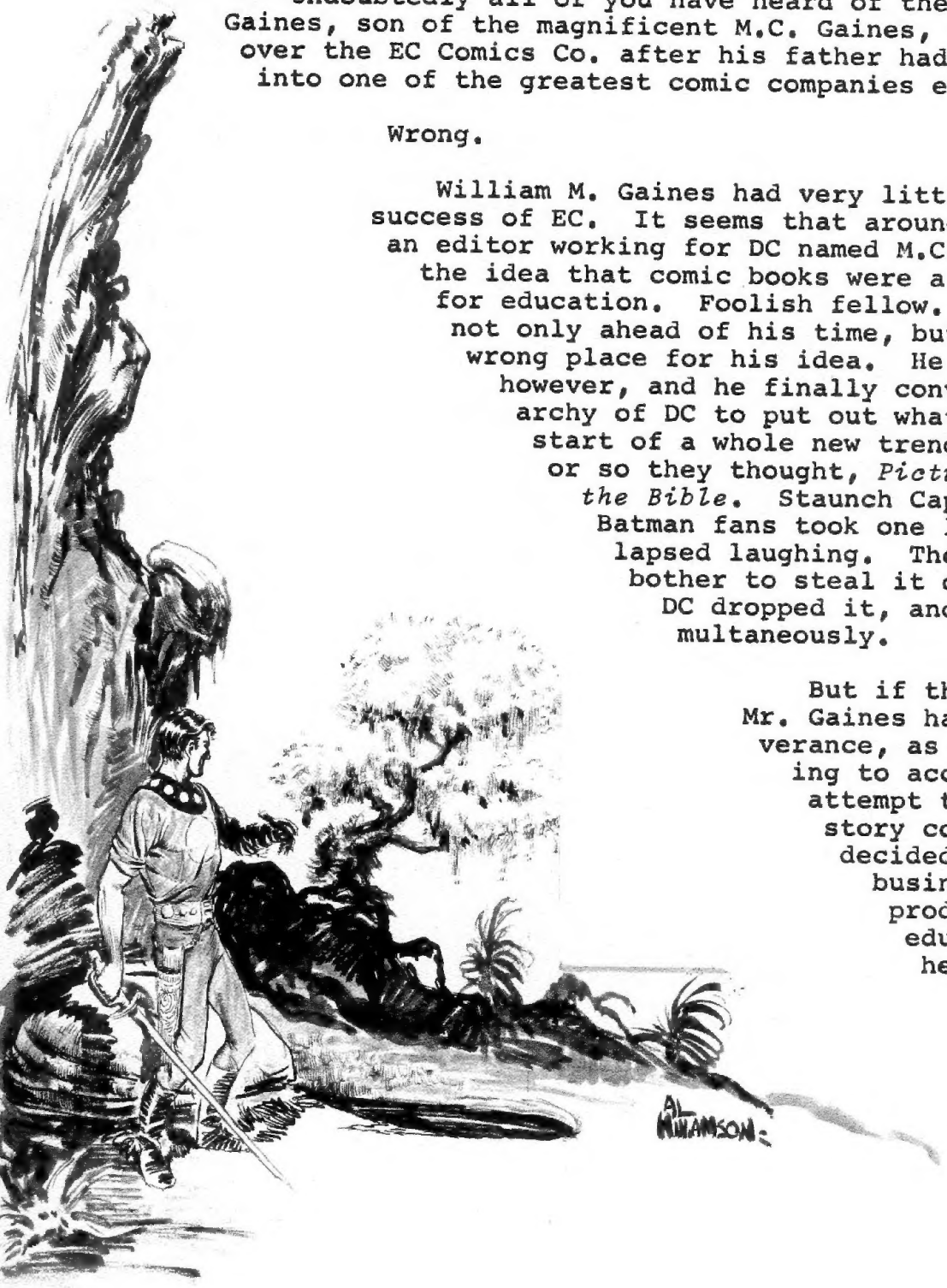


ONE DOLLAR

INSIDE EC
by Jerry Kolden

Undoubtedly all of you have heard of the great William M. Gaines, son of the magnificent M.C. Gaines, the son who took over the EC Comics Co. after his father had died and made EC into one of the greatest comic companies ever, right?

Wrong.



William M. Gaines had very little to do with the success of EC. It seems that around 1945 there was an editor working for DC named M.C. Gaines. He had the idea that comic books were a potential media for education. Foolish fellow. Mr. Gaines was not only ahead of his time, but also in the wrong place for his idea. He was determined, however, and he finally convinced the hierarchy of DC to put out what was to be the start of a whole new trend in comic books, or so they thought, *Picture Stories from the Bible*. Staunch Captain America and Batman fans took one look at it and collapsed laughing. They didn't even bother to steal it off the stands. DC dropped it, and Mr. Gaines, simultaneously.

But if there was one thing Mr. Gaines had, it was perseverance, as in mule. Not willing to accept defeat at DC's attempt to sell the Bible story comic, M.C. Gaines decided he would go into business for himself, producing nothing but educational material, hence the title, Educational Comics, Inc. From this company came such all time favorites as: *Picture Stories*

from Science, *Picture Stories from American History*, *Picture Stories from World History*, and, you guessed it, *Picture Stories from the Bible*, their hot number. The series sold like four week old hotcakes. So, in an effort to pay the bills, a line of children's titles was introduced, including *Animal Fables*, *Tiny Tot Comics*, and *Dandy Comics*.

Need I say how these sold?

M.C. Gaines died before he could go bankrupt, however, and his son, William M. Gaines, inherited the whole bit, including many stacks of unsold copies of *Picture Stories from the Bible*...many, many stacks.

It was at this time that the paths of William M. Gaines and seven young artists, Roy Krenkel, Harry Harrison, Wally Wood, Ross Andru, Ernie Bache, Dick Ayers, Marcus Morris and Jerry Kolden, merged to form the beginnings of the EC Comics Group.

All of these seven were graduates and classmates of the Cartoonists and Illustrators School, where they were taught art by such great illustrators of yore as Paul Reinman (who was, among other things, the illustrator of Green Lantern in the later issues of *All-American*) and the great Burne (Bur-nee) Hogarth, formerly an artist for medical pamphlets and textbooks, specialist in the field of human anatomy, writer of several art books and one time illustrator for the Tarzan newspaper strip. Burne Hogarth, undoubtedly, knew more about artwork than any other comic book artist in North America.

The boys had already had experience illustrating comic books when they met Mr. Gaines. Wally Wood and Jerry Kolden, for instance, had worked at Will Eisner's *American Visuals Corp.*, where Wally had had a

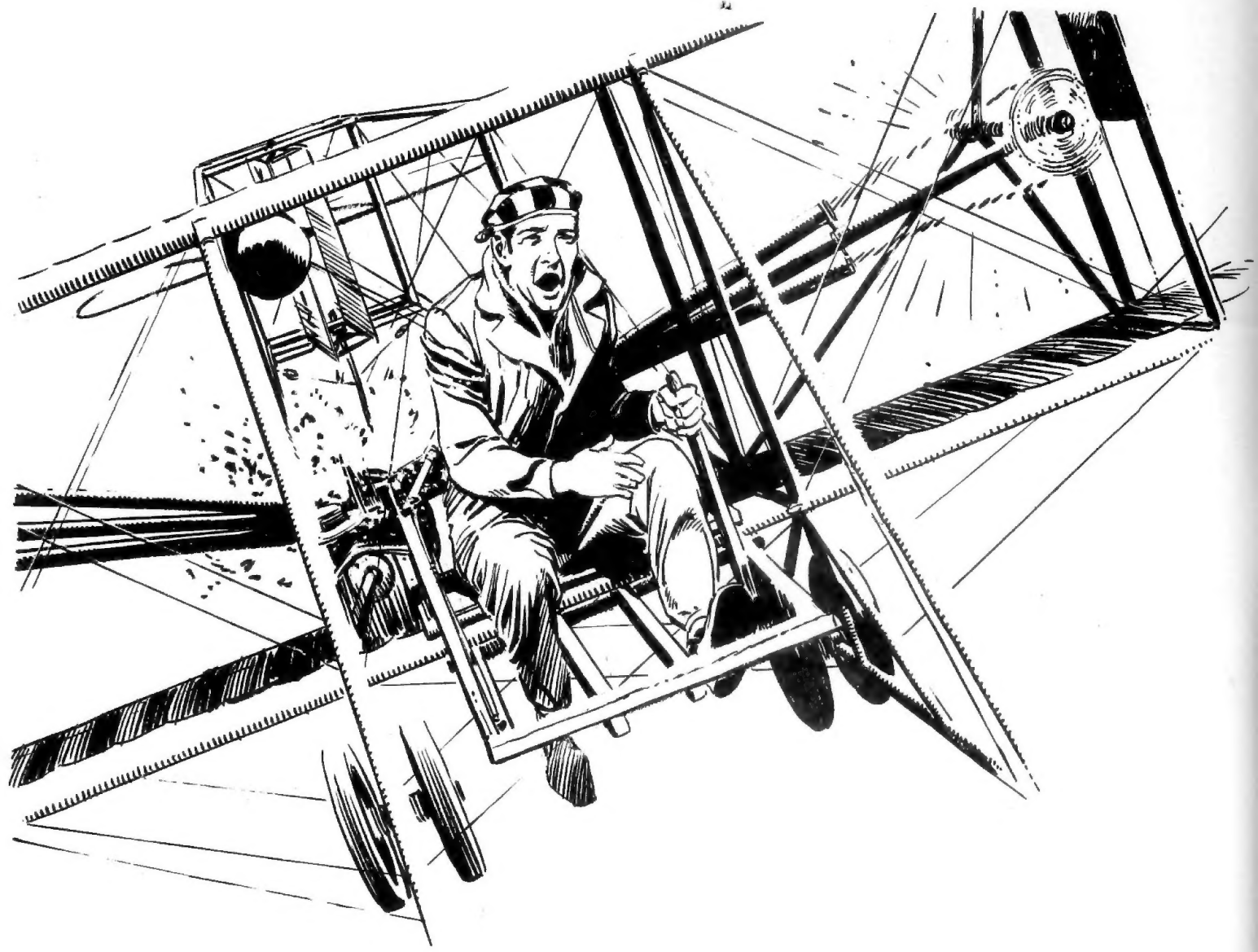
hand in some of the Spirit Sunday sections in the early 50's, and some stories in *Police Comics*, and even some art in the first two issues of the *Uncle Sam Quarterly*. Jerry Kolden had worked for Lev Gleason's *Daredevil Comics* but he tended to put too much background and anatomy into the work when the publishers wanted more emphasis on the straight cartoony style so they let him go for being too good an artist.

When the two representitives of the group, Harry Harrison, the leader of the group, and Wally Wood, a fantastic young artist from the Northeast (all the way down to his accent), who never cleaned his drawing board and left it in a continual state of ink encrusted glory, presented themselves to the offices of Educational Comics Co. (or rather, office), they had one purpose in mind, which they presented in the form of a proposal. They offered to do artwork and scripts for only $15. per page at a time when other publishers were paying $35. per page for artwork alone, on the condition that they could be free to do whatever they wanted and have it printed. This meant that Mr. Gaines had no control whatsoever over the stories that he was publishing. The stacks of unsold Bible Comics towering around his desk were impetus enough, however, so he hired them on their conditions.

All of the seven artists had some hand in the writing, but the best writer was Harry Harrison, who reveled in the 'surprise ending' stories and the science fiction yarns. They worked 24 hours a day steadily, converging in each other's New York apartments at first, then later in Harry Harrison's apartment near Penn Station. Little did their fellow apartment dwellers know of what transpired behind those closed doors...

The first change they worked was in the name: Educational Comics had to go... Exciting Comics?...Enthusiastic Comics?...Enticing Comics? ...How about...Entertaining Comics!

The next step was to change the titles and drop some

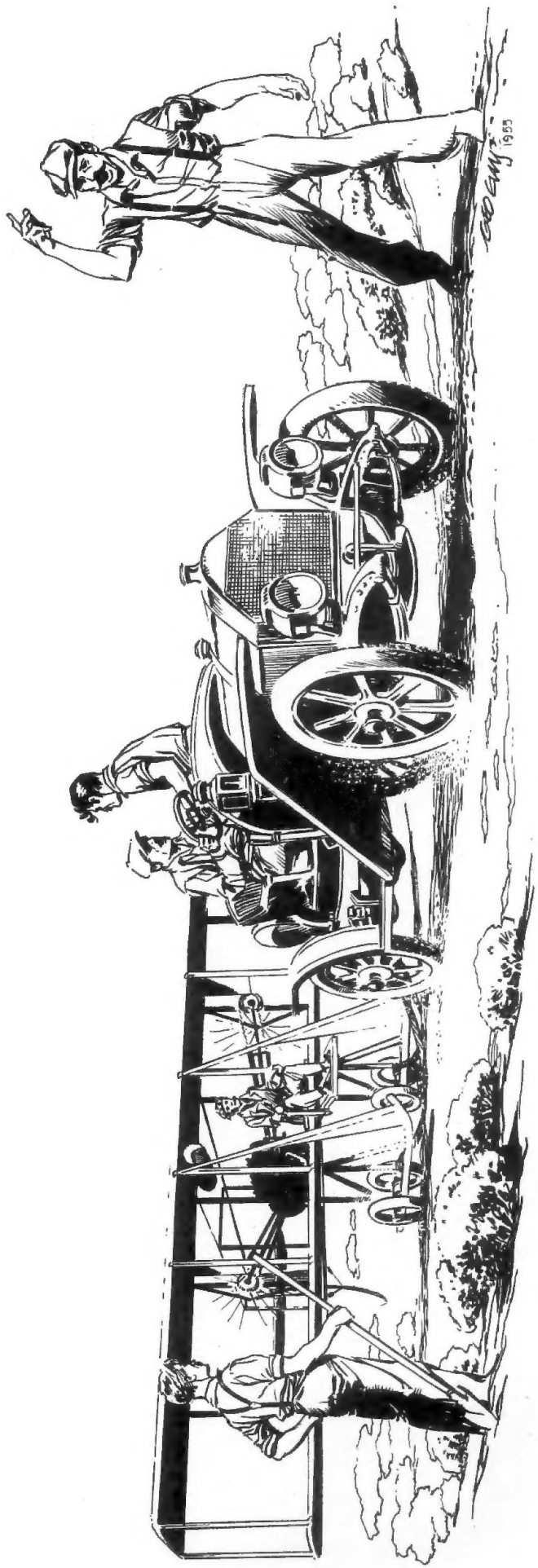


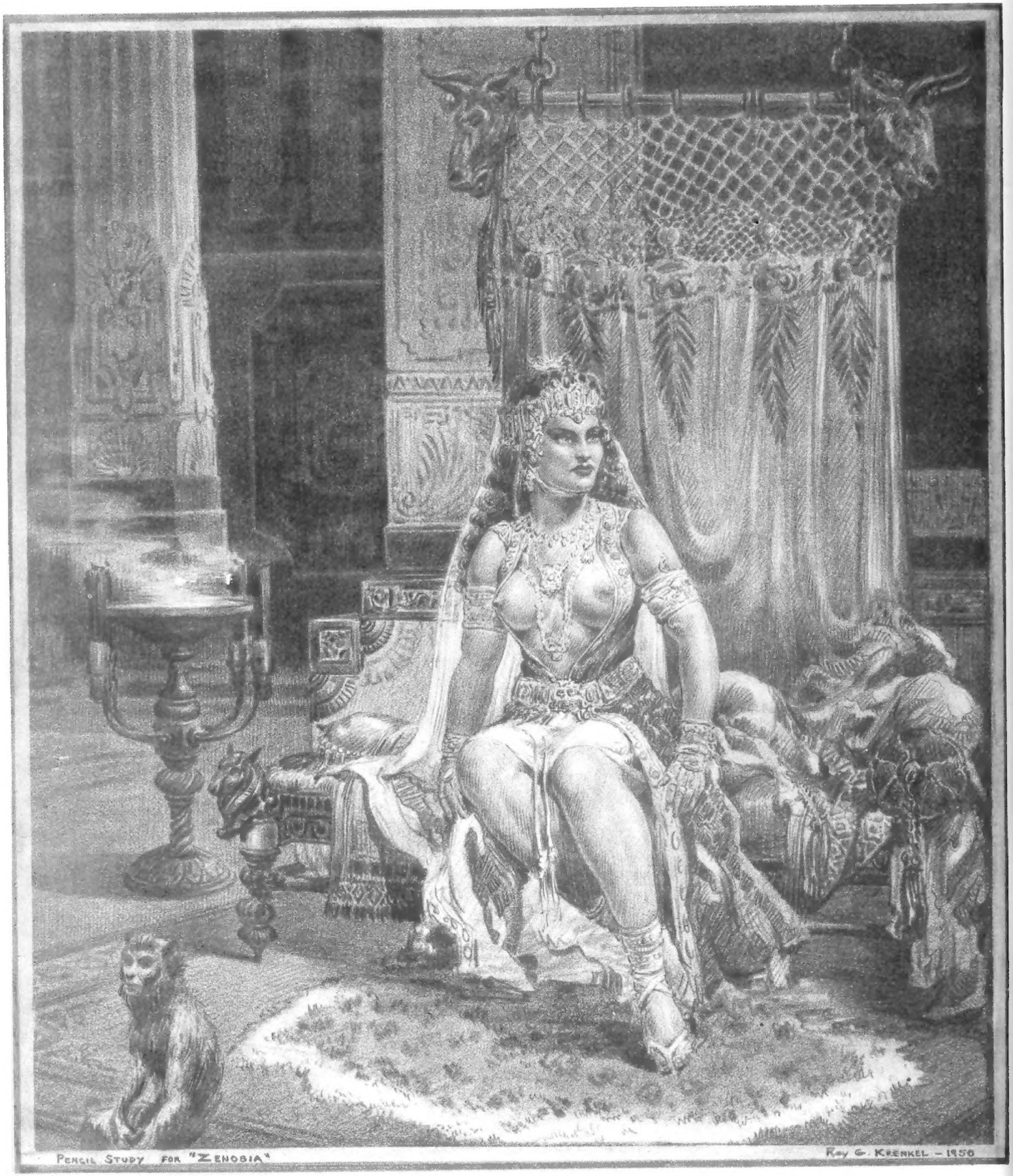
comics. *Dandy Comics*, *Animal Fables*, and *Tiny Tot Comics* vanished, while some of the others were changed so much that all that remained was the numbering. *Fat and Slat* became *Gunfighter*, which became *Haunt of Fear* with the 16th issue. *Happy Houlihans* was changed to *Saddle Justice*, which became *Saddle Romance*, then *Weird Science* by the 12th issue. *International Comics* appeared to later become *Crypt of Terror* with it's 17th issue and eventually *Tales from the Crypt*. *War Against Crime* appeared and was renamed *Vault of Horror* with its 12th issue. King for re-titles, however, was the comic which began as *Moon Girl*, then to *Moon Girl Fights Crime*, then to *A Moon...A Girl...Romance*, and finally *Weird Fantasy*, all within the space 13 issues.

As EC grew, more artists joined them. Al Williamson, Johnny Severin, Frank Frazetta, Will Elder, Harvey Kurtzman, a strange fellow who mailed his work in all the way from Oregon named Basil Wolverton, and 'Ghastly' Graham Ingels. Through constant experimentation and total freedom of plots and artwork, EC rose to a comic book standard peak of writing and artistic excellence never before achieved in the industry. To it's creators and perpetrators, EC was not just a job, it was a well paying hobby (yes, the wages did increase until they were the highest paid in the industry). EC's highest point was reached around the time of the first issue of *Mad*, but after that it began to decline. The ties binding the staff and artists at EC were not terribly strong; the artists and writers did as little or as much as they did, and that's all. This had a decided effect on the final outcome of

EC. Artists drifted away looking for more secure jobs, because they were tired, or by other circumstances. Jerry Kolden was called into the service to fight in Korea. Harry Harrison got tired of the continual deadlines and meagre rewards, and left for Europe to write science fiction stories with names like "Deathworld," "Deathworld 2," and "Bill the Galactic Hero," picking up his collection of Hugos. Dick Ayers was doing work for westerns, like the *Ghost Rider*. The remaining artists didn't produce enough to keep EC above ground.

The former offices of EC echo with the eccentricities of the men who worked there: in one corner, Wally Wood's gummed pens and dirty drawing board; in another, Joe Orlando's light projector (which he used to thro images of other peoples' artwork on the wall and copy their style); and the reverberations of Ernie Bache's booming voice. EC was the biggest conglomeration of oddballs ever to produce a line of comic books. But good things never last. Like Krazy Kat, the Sprit, and Jack Cole, EC met its end. Some say it was because of the shortage of writers, some say a lack of interest. I don't think so. For my money the primary cause for the downfall of EC was Al Feldstein. He was the worst artist to work for EC and one of the worst writers. When Harry Harrison left, Al Feldstein took over the editing of a good many EC mags. The immediate result was a drop in the quality of the stories. Now that Harrison, the best writer, was gone, the stories were only second rate. As time went on there was a slow strangulation of creativity and finally the EC mags didn't sell anymore. Feldstein could not write a horror story, nor a science fiction story. He depended on covering his simple plots with bloodygore, the blood and gore that EC was soon to be crucified for. Only *Mad* survived, through the genius of Harvey Kurtzman, the master of satire and




PENCIL STUDY FOR "ZENOBIA"
Roy G. KRENKEL - 1950

humor in the EC crew.

Wally Wood continued with EC to the end, doing some work for *Mad* even while illustrating for *Galaxy*. Harvey Kurtzman continued for a while, then left to create *Help!*, the cream of the satire crop.

Mad did not remain a true EC magazine. There was the obvious fact that it was no longer a comic book, and that it lacked the quality the EC's once had. Then there was the one real criterian, the one absence that separated *Mad* from the other EC magazines. *Mad* lacked the one trademark of EC more positively identifying it as *EC!* than the emblem on the cover--that colorful little advertisement for the fast-selling much demanded rare

EC item--*Picture Stories from the Bible*..."while they last!"

And you know, they never did sell all of them.

-end

(This article was written by Johnny Chambers from information provided by Jerry Kolden. We are grateful to Johnny for his permission to reprint it from his now defunct Ymir.*)*

Wendy Fletcher / O. Barr - 1970

G. Barr - 1970
T. Kirk

O. Barr - 1970
BJo

CATHY HILL

James Shull 1970
© Barr - 1970

©. Barr - 1970
AUSTRALIA

J. NELSON
© Barr - 1970

JEFF JONES
1969 ©
G. Barr-1970

A FOLIO

Over a year ago Rob Gustaveson asked me for a folio. With the best intentions, I agreed to provide one. I have a hesitation almost amounting to a superstition on doing folios, having done several and never seen one in print (Since agreeing to do this one, Rob has informed me that this issue will be the last. Consider yourself fortunate that this issue has come out at all.)

One evening while Wendy Fletcher and I were sketching and conversing(very soon after having viewed some of the Jones/Bode collaborations exhibited at the World Science Fiction Convention in St. Louis), we agreed to try rendering each other's sketches. From it came the idea for this folio. At first it was a cop-out on my part, since coming up with an original idea for a drawing is far the most difficult part of the job. If I could get six or eight other artists to de the greater half of the work, I could do the finishing and take a lion's share of the credit. It didn't work out that way...

Wendy's drawing was simple and kind of fun. Her style, being influenced primarily by comics and animation techniques, was very clean, sharp, and uncluttered. No texturing, no shadows of any kind were indicated in her preliminary. So I was free to render it in any way I saw fit. I could have simply followed her outline and inked it in, but there'd have been little point in it. She'd have done that herself, most likely. So I decided to go entirely the other way and give it full-dimensional shading, exactly as I'd have done had it been my own drawing. The result was fascinating. Anyone with any degree of familiarity with Wendy's work could have told at a glance that she'd drawn it. The characters, their attitudes, the situation and arrangement: all were hers. But just as obviously, she hadn't rendered it. The rendering, silver-point technique with a ball-point pen, was entirely mine.

This set the pattern for the drawings that followed. I gave no instructions at all about what to draw nor how to draw it; accepted none at all on how to interpret it. In all cases, I left it, as much as possible, exactly as it was drawn, rendered in my own style.

Tim Kirk's (unintentional) redrawing of Norman Rockwell's famous *POST* cover offered the same opportunity as had Wendy's. He merely outlined the character but indicated nothing at all of tone or shadow. The combination of Tim's grotesque little cartoon character and my almost sculptural rendering of it made it look like nothing quite so much as imitation Hannes Bok.

With Bjo's drawing a new problem arose. Her sketches are fast and loose, looking very free and half-formed until her inking tightens them into reality. I was left with the problem of deciding WHICH of the many lines to use. I think we were both pleased with the result.

Cathy Hill's drawing, quite unlike Tim's or Wendy's, was so fully rendered (her pencil lines as fine and delicate as anything I could do with a pen) that I could do little more than ink them in. The patterns in the skirt and a slight altering of the flow of a couple of lines were all that I could claim as my part of the work.

Quite the contrary with Jim Shull's piece: Jim keeps much of his intent within his own head, allowing it to happen upon the paper in his final rendering. Thus, a few swirling lines with a pencil can indicate to him, in effect, "Here I will do something elaborate and ornamental." But there was no way at all I could know just what those elaborations might be. Other than the flower-like designs in the background, which he had drawn quite carefully, the robes and the flow of the material were merely indicated rather than defined. I hesitated for some time before deciding to go ahead on Jim's drawing, mainly because I felt he had somehow misunderstood the intent of the folio. He believed it was in some way a contest to see how much I could improve on other people's drawings. That had never entered

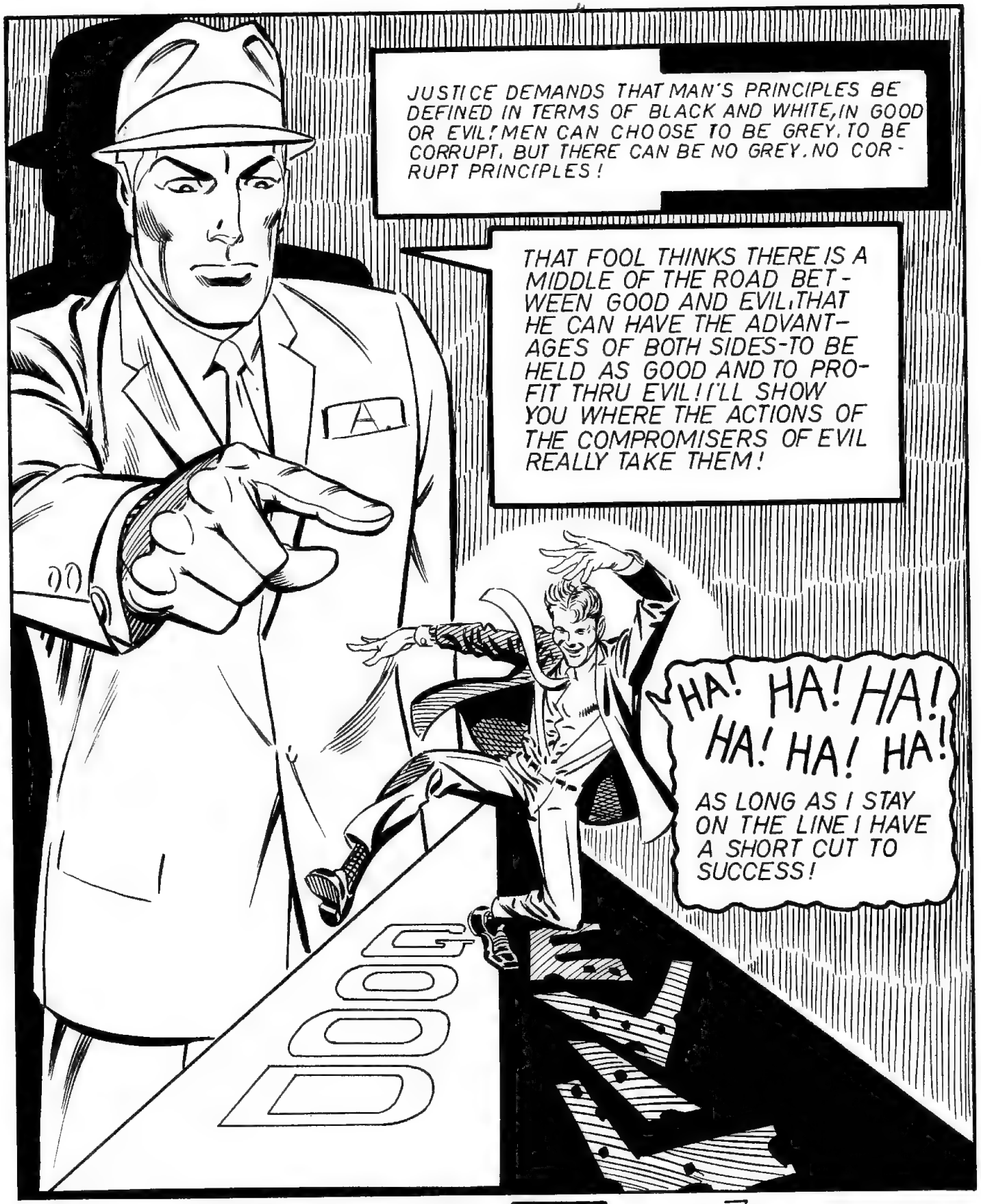
my mind. Rather, I had hoped, it would be interesting to see how two different styles could blend in a single picture. My hope was that the other artists' styles would remain their own, being a framework on which to hang my rendering. Unfortunately, his, of all the drawings, retained least of the original style. This is not Jim's fault, nor is it a fault at all, merely a condition. Jim, being the youngest of the artists, has had less time for his work to settle into the rigid structure of a style. He is still wildly experimental, as more of us should be, and as a result there is less of himself forcing its patterns upon the subject matter. There are no tricks, no gimmicks, no trademarks of Jim Shull to look for. So much of Jim's "style" IS his rendering, and without it there is less of him showing in the finished work.

Alicia Austin presented not so much of a problem as an opportunity. Her delicately outlines figures are deceptive. They move well; the action is good; they look "right." A lesser talent could not accomplish that with as little linework as she uses. Her elaborate patterns and intricate designs are saved for costumes and backgrounds. Her figures often have nothing more than an outline to define their shape. Yet there is no doubt that the figure is real, that all of the bones and muscles are in place, that the figures work. This is what I believe sets her far above Aubrey Beardsley, whom so many feel she is only imitating. Some of Beardsley's distortions could be qualified by "style," but not all. In many cases our eyes are so lost in the intracacies of his rendering that we lose sight of the fact that his people are just plain badly drawn. Not so with Alicia's. The reason: underneath her simple outlines is a thorough knowledge of what makes up a body and how it works. Often, her preliminaries are very precise accurate anatomical studies, from which she selects just the bare essentials of line - just enough to define the figure. So, I had before me, not a sharply clean little hair-line drawing, but a fully formed, round, plump, very real woman. That is how I rendered it. I chose to show the under-working which makes her drawings what they are.

Jim Nielson is a relatively little-known talent in fandom who begins much like Alicia, but takes his rendering in another direction entirely. His pencilings take hours; every muscle is considered, along with superb composition and layout. Then he renders so furiously, had one not seen what went into the preliminaries, he might be fooled into believing that Jim did nothing but scribble, and that the beautiful figures that emerge dimly from their tangled backgrounds happened by accident. I might believe it also, but I've watched the process. I admit I don't understand it, but I envy it. I've rendered his precisely layed-out preliminary - almost sad at not being able to see what he himself might have done with it.

Then there's Jeff Jones. And what can one say about him? This picture came unexpectedly and was the only one that was not drawn specifically for the folio. Rob took it from his own collection, and Jeff very generously gave his permission to let me work on it. Jeff's pencilings are just like his finished work: free, spontaneous, and beautiful. I could not have changed a line of it if I'd wanted to; whatever kind of pencil he used, I couldn't erase the lightest touch. And I guess that's all to the good. I tried to do with pen what he might have done with his paints. Since his pencil wouldn't erase, I was forced to use every line, even the quick sketch lay-out marks (where he'd just indicated that "something" was to go there). I feel that it still looks like a Jeff Jones drawing - I merely completed it.

So there it is - a fandom "FIRST," I believe. It was a ball working on it. I hope you enjoy it as much.


JUSTICE DEMANDS THAT MAN'S PRINCIPLES BE DEFINED IN TERMS OF BLACK AND WHITE, IN GOOD OR EVIL! MEN CAN CHOOSE TO BE GREY. TO BE CORRUPT. BUT THERE CAN BE NO GREY. NO CORRUPT PRINCIPLES!
THAT FOOL THINKS THERE IS A MIDDLE OF THE ROAD BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL. THAT HE CAN HAVE THE ADVANTAGES OF BOTH SIDES-TO BE HELD AS GOOD AND TO PROFIT THRU EVIL! I'LL SHOW YOU WHERE THE ACTIONS OF THE COMPROMISERS OF EVIL REALLY TAKE THEM!
A.
HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
AS LONG AS I STAY ON THE LINE I HAVE A SHORT CUT TO SUCCESS!
DOOG

Mr. A

by Ditko

© STEVE DITKO 1969

IT ALWAY STARTS THE SAME WAY...AT SOME POINT.....

IF I'M HONEST I'LL ONLY GET WHAT MY ABILITES ARE WORTH!
BUT IF I CAN LIE, CHEAT AND STEAL, I'LL BE ABLE TO GET WHAT I'M NOT ENTITLED TO HAVE!
GOOD

BESIDES, I WON'T ALWAYS DO THINGS DISHONESTLY! I JUST NEED A LITTLE EXTRA BREAK, THEN I SWEAR I'LL QUIT AND BE AS PURE AS A SAINT!

IT'S ONLY THE EXTREMES THAT ARE BAD! NO ONE CAN BE PERFECT. A GUY'S GOT TO COMPROMISE TO GET ALONG! IT'S HUMAN NATURE!

NO ONE CAN SAY I'M BAD, I'M BARELY TOUCHING THE EVIL!

I'M ALRIGHT AS LONG AS I DON'T CROSS OVER AND I NEVER WILL! THAT WOULD BE UNFORGIVEABLE!

IT CAN'T DO ANY REAL HARM IF I JUST CUT CORNERS AND TAKE UNFAIR ADVANTAGE OF OTHERS!
2.

I HAVE TO BE DISHONEST A LITTLE LONGER TO COVER UP ALL MY PREVIOUS DISHONEST ACTS !!
BUT I'LL STOP BEFORE I GO TOO FAR ! I'LL STILL BE A DECENT GUY !
I-I-I CAN'T KEEP TRACK OF THE DISHONESTIES I DID TO COVER UP MY OTHER DIS - HONESTIES !
WHY DOES IT HAVE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IF A GUY'S A A LITTLE DISHONEST ! NO ONE IS PERFECT ! WE'RE ALL GREY. ALL CORRUPT !
WHY SHOULDN'T I GRAB MY SHARE ANY WAY I CAN ! EVERYONE ELSE DOES !
WHY DON'T THOSE PEOPLE WHO TALK ABOUT GOOD AND EVIL SHUT UP ! THEY CAUSE ALL THE TROUBLE ! NO ONE IS BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE !
WE'RE ALL ROTTEN..
WHO'S TO JUDGE ?..
A.
THERE'S NO WAY TO DO IT....
EVERYBODY MUST DE - CIDE THEIR OWN "GOOD"
3.

IT'S TIME YOU FACE UP TO WHAT AND WHERE YOU ARE!
MR.A.
OH. NO!!
I'M ON THE GOOD SIDE. I NEVER CROSSED OVER TO THE EVIL! I ONLY MADE LITTLE "HUMAN" MISTAKES!
OH, NO!! HOW DID I GET HERE?? I'M NOT REALLY BAD!! I-I ALWAYS BELIVED IN THE GOOD!
YOU BELIEVED IN THE TRUTH AND TOLD LIES! YOU BELIVED IN HONESTY AND PRACTISED DISHONESTY! YOU BELIEVED IN GOOD AND COMMITTED EVIL!
IT'S NOT YOUR BELIEFS THAT CONDEMN YOU BUT YOUR ACTIONS!
NO! IT CAN'T BE!! I DON'T BELONG HERE! I ALWAY WALKED THE LINE - I'M INNOCENT!! I'M GOOD!! I SWEAR TO GOD I AM!

YOU SELF-BLINDED FOOL! YOUR FIRST CORRUPTED ACT WIPED OUT THE DIVIDING LINE!
AND EVERY ADDITIONAL WRONG ACT CONTINUED TO SPREAD CORRUPTION AND EVIL OVER YOU!
UNTIL YOU RUINED OR WIPED OUT EVERYTHING YOU ONCE HELD AS GOOD!
NOW YOU CAN ONLY SLIDE DEEPER INTO THE DEPTHS OF EVIL!
THERE IS NO MIDDLE OF THE ROAD BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL! THEY ARE NOT TWO PATHS TO THE SAME GOAL BUT TWO PATHS GOING IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS TO DIFFERENT GOALS! YOUR CHOICE OF ACTIONS LED YOU TO WHERE YOU ARE!!
NO! IT'S NOT MY FAULT! I SHOULDN'T BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT I DID OR BECAME!
WHY DO I HAVE TO PAY FOR MY MISTAKES?? WHY DOESN'T SOMEBODY SAVE ME?
END

* THANKS *

KEITH TUCKER

HARRY HARRISON

LEONARD GLUCKSON

RUTHE GLUCKSON

JOHNNY CHAMBERS

LARRY BYRD

KEN RUDOLPH

KORY GLUCKSON

KIM

ELLIE

MICHELLE

ELLEN

NANCY

JODI

LAURIE

MARCIA

KAREN

ELIZABETH

DANIELLE

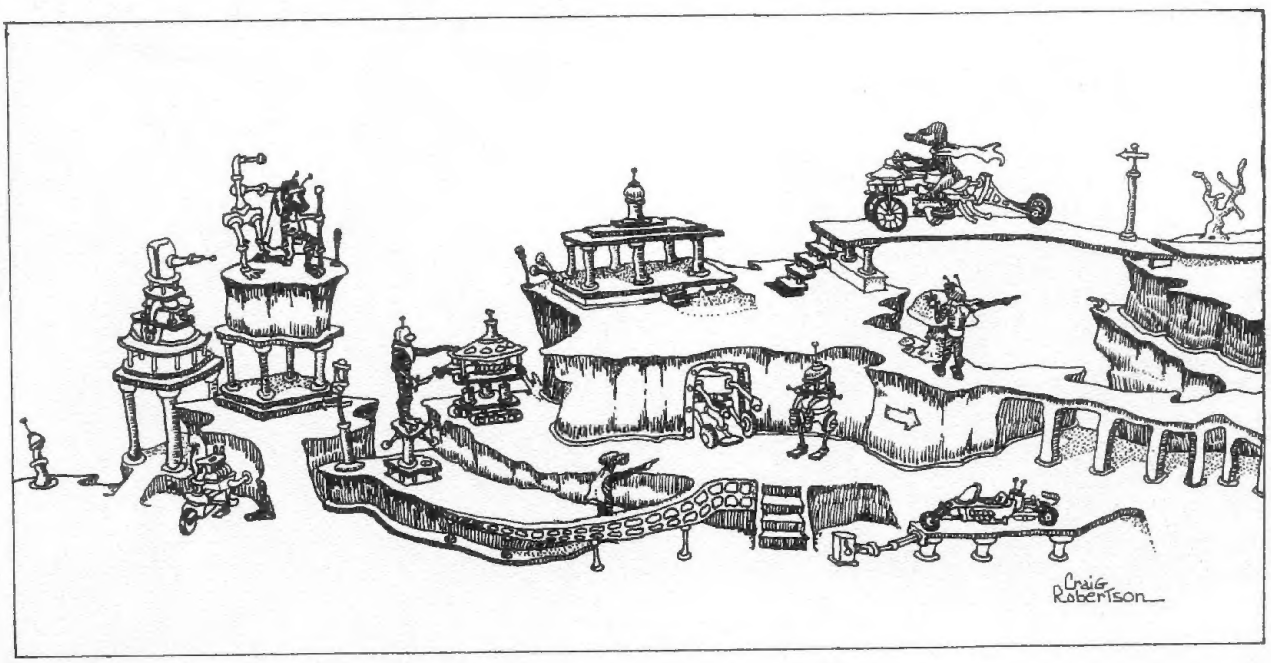
DEBBY

KENNETH WAYNE SOUZA

BILL MUMY

PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN BY ROBERT GUSTAVESON

THE EDITORS WOULD LIKE TO MAKE CLEAR THAT THE PUBLICATION OF STEVE DITKO'S MR. A STRIP IS IN NO WAY AN ADVOCATION OF THE PHILOSOPHY HE EXPRESSES THEREIN.



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Guts, the magazine with intestinal fortitude -- ISSUES FOUR AND FIVE ARE STILL AVAILABLE AT 50¢ PER COPY.
NUMBER FOUR CONTAINS MATERIAL BY RAY BRADBURY, BOB KANE, FORREST J ACKERMAN, TIM KIRK, AND FREDRIC WERTHAM
NUMBER FIVE CONTAINS MATERIAL BY ROY KRENKEL, HARVEY KURTZMAN, STEVE DITKO, JEFF JONES, AND GEORGE BARR
Eon NUMBERS TWO AND THREE ARE STILL AVAILABLE -- 50¢ FOR NUMBER TWO, 75¢ FOR NUMBER THREE, $1 FOR THE TWO.
NUMBER TWO CONTAINS COMIC STRIPS, SCIENCE FICTION, AND ART BY SUCH AS TIM KIRK
NUMBER THREE CONTAINS WORK BY STEVE DITKO, JOE KUBERT, GEORGE BARR, A KELLY FREAS FORTFOLIO, AND TIM KIRK

Mr. A.
by Ditko
YOU ARE NOTHING TO FEAR!
STAY BACK!
YOU KNOW WHERE THERE IS GOOD, I CAN'T EXIST! I NEED THE HELP OF THE CORRUPT TO GIVE ME INFLUENCE AND POWER!
GOOD
EVIL